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ABSTRACT

Although researchers have been interested in identifying characteristics of students using college counseling centers, research approaches have been varied and unsystematic. To investigate student use of the counseling center using the Clark-Trow subculture model; 582 University of Maryland college freshmen were administered a single item assessing their college orientation (academic, collegiate, vocational, or nonconformist). Students were subsequently compared on counseling service usage, services provided, and number of counseling sessions attended. An analysis of the results showed that 26% of the students sought counseling center services over 3 years. Clients were more likely to be academic (42% vs. 34%) and less likely to be vocational (35% vs. 43%) than were non-clients. Collegiate clients had significantly fewer sessions (1.86) than all other groups, while nonconformists had significantly more sessions (8.37). Clark-Trow typology was not related to types of counseling sought. These findings suggest that contrary to expectations, based on enrollment, vocational counseling is less needed, and counseling resources would do better to concentrate on nonconformity and its implications for the client and the institution. (Author/BL)

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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COUNSELING CLIENTS AND NON-CLIENTS ON CLARK-TROW SUBCULTURES

William E. Sedlacek, Paul R. Walters, and Janet L. Valente

Research Report # 1-84

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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COUNSELING CLIENTS AND NON-CLIENTS ON CLARK-TROW SUBCULTURES

RESEARCH REPORT # 1-84

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SUMMARY

582 entering freshmen were administered a single item assessing their orientation to one of four Clark-Trow types (Academic, Collegiate, Vocational, Nonconformist). 26% of these students sought Counseling Center services over three years. Clients were more likely to be Academic (42% vs. 34%) and less likely to be Vocational (35% vs. 43%) than were non-clients. Collegiate clients had significantly fewer sessions (1.86) than all other groups, while Nonconformists had significantly more sessions (8.37). Since more Vocational types are entering UMCP than in previous years, it may be that less, rather than more, counseling is required. Clark-Trow typology was not related to types of counseling sought, providing further support for the conclusion than an increase in Vocational types may not bring an increase in the need for vocational counseling. Suggestions for concentrating counseling resources on nonconformity and its implications for the client and institution are discussed.

College and university counseling centers are designed to serve students. There has been interest in identifying characteristics of students using counseling centers (e.g. Hummers & De Volder, 1979; Martin & Thomas, 1982; Miles & McDavis, 1982, Schneider & Laury, 1981; Sladen, 1982; Walter & Miles, 1982; and Yuen & Tinsley, 1981). There are other studies which have concentrated on user and non-user perceptions of counseling centers (e.g. Aniskiewicz, 1979; Carney & Savitz, 1980; Carney, Savitz & Weiskott, 1979; Shueman & Medvene 1981; Tyron, 1980). While these studies are reflective of the strong interest in the characteristics and needs of the students who use and do not use counseling centers, the research approaches have been varied and unsystematic.

As part of their study on college students help-seeking preferences, Tinsley, de St. Aubin and Brown (1982) have called for a more systematic approach to organizing these "related but scattered investigations" (p. 523).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of counseling centers by students by using the Clark-Trow subculture model (Clark & Trow, 1966). This model offers an organized, systematic approach to understanding students on college campuses. It is a model that has been used to examine student characteristics in many areas of college life and student services (e.g., Little & Murrell, 1982; Mason-Sowell & Sedlacek, 1983; Maw, 1981; Reichel, Neumann & Pizam, 1981; and Sedlacek & Masters, 1980).

It does not appear that this model has been applied to students using counseling centers. By using the Clark-Trow subculture model, it may be possible to identify students in a more systematic, organized manner in an effort to understand the types of students using counseling centers; and to plan for those students who may need counseling center services

Clark and Trow (1966) identified four different student subcultures including academic, collegiate, vocational, and nonconformist, which represent different

orientations toward college or university life:

Academic - attaches greater importance to interest in ideas, pursuit of knowledge, and cultivation of the intellect; often spends leisure time reading books not required for course work and in intellectual discussions.

Collegiate - highly involved in social and other extracurricular activities; considers learning from social relationships part of the college experience.

Vocational - in college primarily to prepare for a career; view practical work experience as more important than intellectual discussions or extracurricular activities.

Nonconformist-emphasizes individual interests and styles; concern for personal identity, and is generally critical of and detached from the college, faculty, and administration.

According to Clark and Trow (1966) these orientations are present when the student arrives at the college or university. These orientations are based on the students' "resource-material, moral, intellectual, emotional, and cultural... which are largely determined by the life experiences the students have had, and these in turn are shaped by the status they and their parents have held in the larger society" (p. 18). Clark and Trow also classify various university characteristics as being differentially supportive of these student subcultures. For example, the small-private-liberal-arts college is more supportive of the academic subculture because the environment facilitates greater contact between students and faculty. This contact reinforces the students' values for academic excellence through exposure to the faculty values. The large state universities, on the other hand, are more supportive of the vocational subculture because they provide less expensive access to the necessary training for entry into the job market.

Of interest here is the question of whether or not the university counseling center draws disproportionately from the student subcultures on campus. In other words, is one subculture more likely to utilize the services provided at the counseling center than others? If so, which services are being used for how long by which subcultures? The answers to these questions are important for both policy makers as well as service delivery personnel in counseling centers.

Method

During freshman orientation, 582 students entering the University of Maryland, College Park, were administered a questionnaire which contained one item which asked which of the four Clark-Trow orientations best described them, using the definitions presented above. Students choosing different Clark-Trow types were compared on three criteria: (1) Whether they sought help from the University Counseling Center over the next three years; (2) Type of Counseling Center services provided; and (3) Number of counseling sessions attended. Data were analyzed by Chi square and analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls post hoc tests at the .05 level.

Results

A total of 149 (26% of 582) students sought Counseling Center services over three years. Table 1 shows that clients were significantly different in their Clark-Trow orientation than non-clients. Clients were more likely to be Academic (42% vs. 34%) and less likely to be Vocational (35% vs. 43%) than were non-clients. There were no significant differences in services provided to the different subcultures (35% personal/social, 20% educational/vocational, 45% reading/study skills). Table 2 shows means and standard deviations for number of counseling sessions by Clark-Trow orientation. Collegiate clients had significantly fewer sessions (1.86) than all other groups and Nonconformist clients had significantly more sessions (8.37) than all other groups. Academic and Vocational clients had an average of four sessions and did not significantly differ from each other.

Discussion

Clark-Trow orientation as measured by a single item appears useful in distinguishing between clients and non-clients at a university counseling center. That clients are more likely to be Academic and less likely to be Vocational is interesting in light of the tendency of many counseling centers to feel that increases in vocationally oriented students should mean increased vocational services. For instance, Mason-Sowell and Sedlacek (1983) found an increase in Vocational Clark-Trow types and a decrease in Academic types over a thirteen year period at the University of Maryland, College Park. They concluded that increased vocational counseling services were called for. Based on the results of the current study, the opposite conclusion might be reached: The more Vocational types and the fewer Academic types, the less that counseling may be required. It is important to note that Clark-Trow typology was not related to types of counseling sought. Thus, Vocational types were not more likely to seek vocational counseling than were other types. This further supports the conclusion that an increase in Vocational types may not bring an increase in the need for vocational counseling. One possible explanation for these findings is that vocationally oriented students may be more likely to be goal directed and less likely to use student services; which could be seen as peripheral to their reason for being in school.

The results of the analysis of the number of counseling sessions for each Clark-Trow type seem particularly useful. Nonconformist clients had a much greater mean number of sessions than any other type. Counseling could be viewed as a process which helps students to conform or get along in the system or to adjust to and/or accept their nonconformity. Learning to handle or conform to a system has been identified as relating to student retention (Tracey and Sedlacek, 1984; Sedlacek, Bailey, & Stovall, (in press).

Thus, concentrating counseling resources and developing new programs on nonconformity and its implications for the client and the institution appear worthy of serious consideration. This conclusion is further supported by the relatively few sessions required by Collegiate types. In a sense the Collegiate types are oriented toward adjusting to and succeeding in the system and hence may need or seek counseling of a shorter duration.

In conclusion, it appears that the Clark-Trow typology may be useful in planning counseling programs in higher education. Furthermore, the use of the typology represents an attempt to answer criticisms made of student personnel research by merging theory with practice in one of the few areas where a model unique to college students has been developed.

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Table 1

Clark-Trow Orientation of
Clients and Non-Clients*

	Academic %	Collegiate %	Vocational %	Nonconformist %
Clients (100%=149)	42	7	35	17
Non-Clients (100%=433)	34	8	43	15

*Differences significant at .05 using Chi square.
Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Table 2

Number of Counseling Sessions
by Clark-Trow Orientation*

	Academic	Collegiate	Vocational	Nonconformist
Mean	4.13	1.86	4.00	8.37
SD	3.11	2.14	3.61	4.24

*Differences significant at .05 using analysis of variance.